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"Introduction" to Developmental Perspectives on Motivation

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Introduction

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This volume marks the 40th anniversary of the Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, and with it a renewed commitment to the Symposium's original focus on motivation. Although we may reemphasize the topic, it is clear that motivation, as an area of study, has changed dramatically over the past 40 years. Although motivation has remained an important theme, it has had to share the stage with other important topics as the field of psychology has expanded. In addition, the concept of motivation has been applied to many diverse areas, has been defined and measured in a variety of ways, and has been used as both description and explanation for a number of social, cognitive, and emotional outcomes. In short, the study of motivation has become more complex and diverse, so that, while reemphasizing it means that all volumes will have motivation as the underlying theme, it also means the inclusion of a richer, more varied array of topics than was possible 40 years ago.

Some of the changes just attributed to the field of motivation, such as greater diversity and complexity, parallel the changes we study in developmental psychology. Thus the theme of "developmental perspectives" seems a particularly fitting issue to herald the Symposium's renewed interest in motivation. In developmental psychology we study most of the same phenomena studied in other

areas of psychology, but with a focus on changes across the life span. Much of the interest in the developmental aspects of motivation begins with the problem cases—the capable adolescent who is not motivated to achieve in school or the child whose motivation is undermined by a poor self-concept. Thus the questions we ask about motivation are often guided by an interest in predicting (and even changing) developmental outcomes based on our knowledge of the ways various biological and experiential factors affect development. How is motivation maintained and transformed across the life span and across tasks? What personal characteristics and what task-specific features affect motivation? How does the level of development interact with the environment to hinder or enhance motivation? These and other questions provide the basis for developmental research in this area.

Surprisingly, within developmental psychology, motivation is seldom seen as a subject area of its own. The topic is unlikely to be found as a chapter heading in introductory textbooks in developmental psychology or as part of a core curriculum for graduate students. However, this does not mean that there is little interest in the development of motivation. It means, instead, that the topic has become integrated into a number of diverse areas. As motivational concepts have been applied to more areas, our thinking about them has expanded and become broader and richer.

My goal in assembling the chapters in this volume was not only to present the best current work in the area, but to foster integrative thinking by bringing together diverse approaches to conceptualizing and studying the topic. To this end, I tried to represent different periods of the life span, influences from various sources, and both emotional and cognitive components of motivation that are important for development. In other words, I wanted to provide a look at the breadth and diversity of research on motivation, extending the more traditional area of achievement motivation to include some new perspectives from outside developmental psychology that I believe are important for the growth of motivation. The obvious danger in looking for unique perspectives is that the chapters might have nothing in common and would fail to form a coherent picture. I do not think that has happened in this case. Although the authors who contributed to this volume come from different subdisciplines and from different perspectives within psychology, there were nu-

merous overlapping themes. The most notable of these were: (1) an emphasis on the self (whether labelled the I-self, the core self, or self-perceptions); (2) an emphasis on the internal (e.g., intrinsic motivation, flow) and external (e.g., family, schools) factors that affect developing motivations; and (3) an emphasis on the choices that may result from one's cognitive, social, or emotional motivations.

The opening chapter by Richard M. Ryan places the entire volume in context by giving historical and theoretical perspectives on development and developmental models that may be used to understand motivation. His viewpoint is that of both a clinician and a researcher as he discusses his own work on autonomy and factors that facilitate or undermine intrinsic motivation. In general, this chapter proposes an integrative approach that expands on an organismic view by including social contexts that support the expression of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in shaping what Ryan calls the core self.

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Kevin Rathunde also focus on intrinsic motivation, but they are most interested in the motivation that emerges from the sense of satisfaction, or flow, that comes with full involvement with an activity. They advocate using ongoing, moment-to-moment sampling to explore motivation as it occurs, and their research using the experience sampling method (ESM) typifies this view. After discussing research conducted over several years and with diverse samples, they highlight a longitudinal study of the flow experiences of adolescents. The chapter concludes by asking what experiences an environment (particularly families) should provide for children so that they develop complex and conscious motivational systems that will lead to full involvement in activities, and thereby to more productive lives.

The chapter by Susan Harter picks up the theme of the self system, begun in Ryan's chapter, and contrasts the I-self and the me-self by reviewing the models of William James and Charles Cooley. She then reviews her own research with diverse samples from early childhood through adulthood, discussing points of convergence with those models. Her work indicates that self-esteem is related to social support and to competence in important domains; these constructs, in turn, are good predictors of mood state. In addition, an unexpectedly high relation between self-evaluation of physical appearance and self-esteem causes her to consider the liabilities of the

"looking-glass self" and to suggest a more Eastern philosophy, focusing on the I-self.

Although the previous chapters all mention the importance of social contexts, Jacquelynne S. Eccles *stresses* the link between the social contexts of family and school and the motivational constructs related to achievement and activity choice. She presents the complex general expectancy-value framework that she is known for and fills out more of the details with recent empirical work. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first part describes how parental practices early on and through adolescence lead to gender-differentiated choices that may alter males' and females' motivations, interests, self-perceptions, and activities. The second half describes how the lack of fit between adolescent development and schools, as well as parent and teacher expectations, may lead all students to experience lowered motivation (particularly in achievement) during adolescence. This chapter provides many research examples that corroborate the points made in the earlier chapters about supportive and nonsupportive social contexts.

The chapter by Laura L. Carstensen maintains Eccles's focus on the importance of activity choice but is concerned with a later point in the life span, when social contact declines. Although Carstensen does not talk about motivation in the traditional sense, and does not even use the word very much, she is clearly talking about social-emotional motivation for activity selection. She suggests that people become increasingly discriminating in their social partners as they age, as a result of changing social motivations. This chapter complements the others by concentrating on another part of the life span (although some of her work extends down to adolescence) and by contrasting with the more cognitive models offered earlier. Carstensen contends that emotions are the organizing, and thus motivating, force for choices about how and with whom to spend time.

To highlight the reemphasis on motivation this year, we changed the format of the Symposium as well. In previous years speakers have given their presentations at two different times during the year, although the papers have always been published as a single volume. Beginning with this year, we invited all the speakers to present at the same conference rather than having two meetings. This enabled a discussant to comment on all the papers while speakers were present to interact. That commentary, provided by

Ryan, is presented as the last chapter in this volume. The other change in format that is noteworthy was the addition of a poster session during the Symposium. Researchers from around the country were invited to share poster presentations of their latest work, and the abstracts for the posters are included at the end of this volume.

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